"It is the People's Book"

The process leading to the publication of *Voices United* (1996), the hymnal of The United Church of Canada

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Introduction

My interest in church music began with powerful experiences of singing as a youth in the United Church of Canada. As my experience as a choral singer has grown, it has become clear to me that there is power in music as used in a religious context. Songs do something words by themselves cannot do. In recent years, as a professional church musician in the Anglican Church, I have been faced with questions of musical repertoire, recognizing that as a music leader I have power to guide the faith expressions of others.

As a church musician in a local congregation, I often ask: What song shall we sing? In other words, what is the appropriate hymn or song for a given circumstance? What mood or emotion will this or that hymn arouse? What style of music is appropriate for this service? Are we to use this hymnbook, that songsheet, or the overhead projector? But occasionally I contemplate some of the broader questions about church music, and I might have discussions with others, about: What music is worthy of inclusion in our service of worship? For example, does "pop" music have a place? What should our position be, regarding the language of worship? Should we maintain our attachment to texts which are seen as archaic, militaristic, sexist or discriminatory? If not, how will we retain a connection with our musical heritage? What repertoires from other churches and cultures should be included in our worship? How do we involve children and youth in the music of worship? And who has the right to decide the answers to these questions?

These are questions asked on a local level, acknowledging the power of music in the congregation. They are important questions. But in most churches, answers are not arrived-at in isolation. The issues have been discussed before, by local and national church

leaders. As a result of their judgments, hymn books are placed in the hands of the congregation, and ministers and musicians are free to choose from a repertoire which has been included in that book, or to choose music from outside it. They may bring in another hymnal, from another tradition. But in doing so they choose to identify their congregation as separate from the wider church.

For example, with one hymnal in hand, worshippers could sing "Lord I Want to be a Christian" (anonymous spiritual) and perhaps be emotionally moved to an experience of conversion. In another hymnal they would not have this hymn available to them, but rather might sing, "Now There Is No Male or Female" (Lynette Miller 1985), and be reminded of the inclusive freedom of the family of God. Each of these hymns carries within it symbols of, and associations with, theological ideas which have powerful implications for the church. A church which sings from either of these hymnals will be identified through its music.

Thus local church leaders make a choice between hymnals: whether to use the denominational book or some other resource. If they choose the denominational hymnal, they are choosing to submit some of their decision making to those who assembled it. They trust that the collection from which they choose hymns and songs, Sunday after Sunday, has been scrutinized by an editorial committee that knows their needs, a group that has considered all of the important contemporary questions surrounding church music: the "broader questions" I mentioned above.

That being the case, the process of an editorial committee in answering those questions in the preparation of a new hymnal has the effect of establishing the identity of the churches which make use of that resource. As repertoire is chosen, the character of

the wider church is defined, just as that of the local church is defined by its choice of hymnal, and by what hymns it chooses to sing from that book. The American hymnologist and hymn book editor Carleton R. Young put it this way: "A denomination's general hymnal is a window to its history, theology, polity, sociology, and ethos" (Young 1997, p.37).

With this in mind, I felt that it could be instructive to inquire into the process leading to the selection of hymn book repertoire, so that I as a church musician could learn how an editorial committee tackled some of my "broader questions", and benefit from the wisdom of those who have explored the issues in greater detail than I would ever hope to do on my own.

The publishing of *Voices United*, the hymnal of The United Church of Canada, in 1996, has provided me with an opportunity to make a study of such a process. In the following paper, I am only able to touch upon some of the complex issues involved. But I examine the views of some of those who were in a position to shape the identity of the church through its musical repertoire: members of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee (HWRC). After a brief look at some recent thinking about the function of music in religion, I describe the historical and political context of the committee's work. I follow with a description of the activities of the committee itself as recorded in its minutes, and as discussed in interviews with some of its members. Finally, I explore some of the issues with which the committee was confronted in its deliberations.

Method

I interviewed ten of the twenty-four members of the Hymn and Resource Committee of The United Church of Canada, including the Managing Editor of *Voices United*, John Ambrose. This group was entrusted by the church's General Council, at its 1990 meeting, with the task of preparing a new hymn resource. I also spoke to Meg Grieve, former staff member for the Leadership Development Committee of the United Church, who was involved with the selection of the committee, and to Fred Graham, the Consultant for Congregational Worship for the Division of Mission in Canada of the United Church. In addition to being a member of the HWRC, Fred Graham is the staff member currently responsible for *Voices United*. The interviews took place between January and April of 1998. Most were by telephone, although I was able to meet with two of the members (Leonard Lythgoe and Joan McMurtry) in person. A brief biography of each of the interviewees is provided in Appendix A, along with a list of names of all committee members.

I prepared questions in advance, and asked the same questions of each member I interviewed. Copies of the questions were submitted to interviewees in advance, upon request. The list of questions is attached, as Appendix B.

In order to record these conversations I chose to type their answers at the computer keyboard as they spoke. Occasionally I would be unable to complete the typing of an answer, because another equally interesting comment followed it too closely. In these cases, I returned to my computer immediately after the conversation, and completed sentences, according to my memory of the conversation. In accordance with generally-

accepted practice, I have used square brackets [ ] to distinguish my interpolations from the accurate record of the words they used.

In addition, Fred Graham provided me with copies of minutes of the meetings of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee from the four years that they met. These are on file at his office, at the Division of Mission in Canada of the United Church of Canada, Toronto.

The functions of music in religion

It will be useful to consider some of the literature about what music does in the spiritual lives of people, and to keep these in mind as we consider the activities of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee.

First, an experience of music is an experience which connects people to one another through their emotions. Ethnomusicologist Edward O. Henry described the ways in which singing gives pleasure to the individual. The person experiences it sensually, in the body; and also socially, beyond the body, as they join in group musical activity (1988, p.117). David Henderson, who, like Henry, was working with South Asian religious music, would prefer to think of the interaction between the individual and the group as a form of resonance. According to Henderson, "...it is the apparition that one's personal experience is resonating so strongly with the experiences of others, the sense that one's own sensations are not only reflections but also vibrating amplifications of a social experience, that ultimately gives pleasure (1994, p.447).

Henderson's description of the social experience of music could also be applied to church music, where in hymn-singing an individual's experiences can be thought of as vibrating amplifications of social experience. The hymns Christians sing have power as a result of this experience of resonance.

Secondly it is an experience which remains with the singer. As sacred music scholar Linda Clark writes, "Hymn images accompany the singers throughout their lives and surface in ordinary places, often without bidding, to reinterpret experience" (1994,

p.6). These hymn memories become carriers of meaning for the church, enabling it to retain its emotional connection with the system of beliefs it espouses:

> As a community sings "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" it journeys back to that hillside so vividly captured in the Christian imagination and relives the faith that that image has carried throughout the ages. Yet what the journey back to that hillside retrieves is *not* the actual experience of the crucifixion itself....No, it is the *meaning* of the crucifixion activated through the images of the hymn that is retrieved. Transformation is possible when the meaning of that event with its joyous outcome in resurrection is attached through the singing of the hymn to present suffering, thereby bringing hope to birth in the soul of the singers. Even standing mute, letting the community take over when one's voice fails, an individual can have suffering transformed through the hope being proclaimed by others (Clark 1994, p.7).

Similarly, in the context of Hinduism, Henderson remarks upon the power of musical tradition, in which "singers, musicians and listeners continually imagine and establish linear relations with a past through their practices....[C]laims to tradition are not empty associations with an undifferentiated and unchanging past, but are references fraught with the peculiar histories of the individuals who make use of the past, 'attributing meaning to the present through making reference to the past'(Handler and Linnekin 1984, p.287)" (Henderson 1996, p.444).

And thirdly, because of the meaning attached to them, hymns become what Linda Clark describes as "the Protestant equivalent of the Orthodox icons" (1994, p.5). They form part of the *mythos* of the community: the stories, myths and songs "that express and inform the identity of a people—what they value and cherish, what motivates them" (1994, p.8).

Thus the music of a religious group has the power to connect members to one another and to their history through their experience of singing, and in doing so it informs the identity of the community itself.

Context

The role of hymns in the history of the Christian church

Christian leaders saw the value of music early in the history of the church. In the fourth century, St. Augustine wrote: "[S]o often as I call to mind the tears I shed at the hearing of thy church songs, in the beginning of my recovered faith, yea, and at this very time, whenas I am moved not with the singing, but with the thing sung (when namely they are set off with a clear voice and suitable modulation), I then acknowledge the great good use of this institution" (Augustine, *Confessions* II).

Some eleven hundred years later, Martin Luther observed that "the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming the Word of God through music, and by providing sweet melodies with words" (Luther 1538). Accordingly, Luther provided opportunities for hymns to be sung by the people, in their own language, alongside the traditional office hymns of the Latin service.

He and the other reformers believed in "...the emotional power of music," according to the church music historian Nicholas Temperley. They were "...concerned to harness it for the good of men's souls" (Temperley 1979, p.4). They knew the practical usefulness of music as a powerful tool for evangelism and for the encouragement of the church.

The printing press made it possible for the reformation leaders to disseminate the texts of hymns widely "...so that from early in the sixteenth century the new religion could be put into the very mouths of the people..." (Temperley, p.19).

Since that time, collections of church music have become important objects in the lives of Christians. In the book-racks of the pews in most contemporary Protestant churches, the hymn book takes a prominent place, right next to the Bible. According to John Ambrose, the editor of *Voices United*, "Hymns have always had a central place in the making of Christians. For many, next to scripture, a hymnal is the church's most important sourcebook" (Ambrose 1996, p.x). It is a denomination's authoritative collection of music and words for singing in Christian worship. It is an individual's context for experiencing collective religious expression.

History of The United Church of Canada

The United Church was born from a desire on the part of late nineteenth-century Canadian protestants to establish a Christian society across Canada. In fact, quite apart from this high-minded aspiration of their leadership, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Anglicans were getting together for purely practical reasons. As immigration moved further west, inherited social ties weakened and resources stretched, the distinctions between these denominations seemed to be difficult to maintain. In small communities, groups of Christians simply gathered together in "union congregations, in which older distinctions....were no longer noticed" (Noll 1992, p.280).

Church leaders were also making theological arguments for such a union. They felt that if the various branches of protestantism would only unite, they would be closer to fulfilling the words of Christ, praying on behalf of his followers, "The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:22-23, NRSV).

There were political reasons to band together. After confederation in 1867, Canadian Protestants wanted to "provide a special Christian bonding for the new nation" (Noll 1992, p.281). This was not to be a religious structure identified with the state and imposed in the form of an established church. Attempts by Anglican Bishop John Strachan in pre-confederation times to establish the Church of England as the state church were fought successfully by Methodist leader Edgerton Ryerson and his followers. Indeed, Ryerson fervently desired a Christian Canada. But this new union would be made up of those who voluntarily called themselves Christians. Congregationalist William T. Gunn, who later served on the committee compiling *The Hymnary* (1930), envisioned "one great National Church of all that love God, working together to make our Dominion His Dominion from sea to sea and all the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ" (quoted in Noll 1992, p.282).

Accordingly, in 1902 the Methodist General Conference made an official request to the Presbyterians and Congregationalists to work together toward the goal of union. In 1908, a Basis of Union was completed, forming a doctrinal statement which dealt with the matters upon which there had been disagreement between the denominations. Although the Methodists and Congregationalists were ready to sign immediately, a dispute within the Presbyterian church, accompanied by the onset of World War I, caused the final signing to be delayed until June 10, 1925.

History of hymn resources in the United Church of Canada

The founders of the United Church recognized the significance of a hymnal as the unifying symbol of the common life of the new denomination. They also saw the importance of hymn singing to the people of all three founding churches. Right away, the

new denomination began work on a hymn book of its own, even though one of the founding bodies, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, had brought out its own *Book of Praise* as recently as 1918. Members of the United Church's Committee on Church Worship and Ritual completed their work in 1930 "after years of devoted labour", with the stated aim "that all worshippers within the United Church of Canada may be provided with a book of common praise, whereby they may continue the gracious practice of singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord" (*The Hymnary*, Preface, p.v).

The Committee also desired to further the work of union by offering "a hymnody true to the genius, history, and tradition of the Communions which now compose The United Church of Canada. Here will be found the stateliness and tenderness of the Scottish Psalter, the glowing passion and evangelical fervour of the Wesleys, and the lyrical qualities by which Congregational Hymnody has been ever distinguished" (*The Hymnary*, Preface, p.v-vi).

In the 1960's, church union was the motivation behind the compilation of another new hymnal, for a new generation of churchgoers. In this instance, the hymn resource was seen as a symbol of the potential union between the Anglican and United churches in Canada. The Anglican/United Joint Committee was the embodiment of the spirit of cooperation envisioned by church leaders in both communions. The secretary of the Joint Committee, and its driving force[1], was the Rev. Stanley L. Osborne, whose book, *If Such Holy Song,* describes the activities of the committee. Church union was a prime motivation for committee members, as evidenced by his description of the resolution of tensions within the group:

> At last, when the first summary of the choices of text and tune was presented... all concern about imbalance – that was the nub

> of the anxiety – disappeared like mist. Members were amazed how impressive the result really was. By that time they realized how much they had grown in understanding and appreciation of one another: they were now acting as a single unit, indivisible and thoroughly committed to their task. Some even remarked that "the new manifestation of the church had already come into being" (Osborne 1976, p. xi).

It was a remarkable example of the power of music to unify a group. Yet in spite of the dedication of committee, the desired Anglican/United union did not come about. *The Hymn Book* became the primary hymn resource of both denominations for the next twenty-five years.

This is not to say that *The Hymnary* of 1930 and *The Hymn Book* of 1971 were the only hymn resources of the United Church up until the publishing of *Voices United* in 1996. Several supplemental books were produced, including *Songs for Little Children* (1937), *The Canadian Youth Hymnal* (1939), *Songs of the Gospel* (1948), and *Songs for a Gospel People* (1987). Each of these was produced with the stated purpose of meeting congregational needs which were not being met by the primary resource.

The most recent, *Songs for a Gospel People: A supplement to The Hymn Book (1971),* was produced in 1987 by the Alberta and British Columbia conferences of the church. Gerald Hobbs was the editor. He described the need for the supplement in this way in its Preface: "[W]e have passed new milestones in our journey as a people of God. New calls to faithfulness are heard; new responses are needed... [T]here is a growing sense among us that we need new resources if our singing is to fill its proper place in worship" (Hobbs 1987). Thus the perceived need was for something "new": new in its musical style, "inclusive" in its language. But *Songs for a Gospel People* is not entirely a collection of new hymns. Hobbs included several which seem to be old favourites,

"...songs from our heritage not found in *The Hymn Book*," as he described them. This would mean hymns from *The Hymnary* and its predecessors, hymns such as "O for a thousand tongues to sing," with text by Charles Wesley (1739), and "Blest be the tie that binds," by John Fawcett (1782).

In the Atlantic provinces these "heritage hymns" were staples of United Church worship. But *Songs for a Gospel People*, with its mix of contemporary songs and old favourite hymns was not well received there. It "didn't penetrate points east," according to HWRC co-chair Leonard Lythgoe (Lythgoe interview 1998a). In fact, some churches still had not come to accept *The Hymn Book* as their central music resource by the 1980's. Congregations of rural Newfoundland were keeping their traditions alive by using another supplement, *Songs of the Gospel*. It was published in 1948 as a supplement to *The Hymnary*. According to HWRC member John Murphy of Newfoundland, "In terms of emotion, [*Songs of the Gospel*] would be the basis of planning for worship. It would be important for a lot of congregations... There are congregations who had never had [*The Hymn Book*] (Murphy interview 1998).

For these congregations, the officially sanctioned hymnal, the symbol of unity for the church, was not even part of their worship. And similarly, the unifying function of *The Hymn Book* was lost for churches in the western provinces and in Ontario whose worship was dominated by *Songs of a Gospel People*.

North American trends in language used for worship

Along with a diversification of musical styles in some Canadian churches, especially through the use of *Songs of a Gospel People* (1987), came a gradual change in the language used for worship. This was a trend throughout the Christian church: a

positive response to what J.A.T. Robinson had described in 1963 in his influential book *Honest to God* as the "anachronistic, hierarchical, pre-scientific, and pre-democratic" language of worship (quoted in Young 1997, p.29). New hymns and songs reflected a sensitivity to issues of inclusiveness, avoiding exclusively male images of people and God, anachronisms ("Thee", "Thy" and "Thou"), hierarchical language ("Lord") and militaristic language (as in "Onward Christian Soldiers").

In a recent review of the *New Century Hymnal* (1995) of the United Church of Christ in the United States, Carlton R. Young, himself the editor of *The Methodist Hymnal* (1989), listed several updated hymnals which have been produced in the U.S. over the past 25 years. He discussed the contributions made by various denominations to the debate about language. The first to deal with the problem of archaic language was the Presbyterian *Worshipbook* (1970-1972). The *Hymnal of the United Church of Christ* (1974) was the first to use inclusive language. The editors of *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) modified some words referring to people: "Men" was changed to "all", "mankind" to "humankind", and so on. The Protestant Episcopal *Hymnal* (1982) kept "Thee" and "Thou", made some hymns more inclusive, but, according to Young, "...advanced the process by removing or modifying words and descriptions that had become discriminatory... For example...the words...'Hear him, ye deaf, his praise, ye dumb,' in deference to the recent shift in meaning of 'dumb' from a person who cannot speak to one who is 'stupid,' became 'Hear him, ye deaf, ye voiceless ones.'" (Young 1997, p.29) The editors of the *Methodist Hymnal* (1989), including Young himself, were critical of militaristic hymns, and attempted, unsuccessfully, to remove "Onward Christian Soldiers" from the book (Young 1997, p. 30).

As for *The New Century Hymnal* (1995), Young was unsparing in his criticism of the extreme changes made by the editors. He felt that a substitution of theologically-updated words into hymn texts violated their earlier poetry. Most of the hymns were "recast inclusive by the editors, exclusively in a hymnic dialect formed from a feminist-inclusive hypothesis of justice versus aesthetics, and realized in an unrelenting pursuit of consistency" (Young 1997, p.37). Consistency in the application of principles about language came at too high a price, in his view.

This was the North American context in which the United Church of Canada began to contemplate the idea of a new hymnal. And in this context, many in the denomination felt the lack of a common resource which reflected new ideas about language.

Movements Within the United Church

By the late 1980's, as Canadian society became more diverse, members of the United Church of Canada increasingly involved themselves in smaller groups according to their interests. As the universality of traditional spirituality waned, these smaller groups attempted to express a spirituality of their own experience. A women's movement held weekend gatherings, at which women sang hymns and songs which celebrated the female attributes of God. Gay and lesbian groups within the church grew in strength and prominence. On the other side of the theological spectrum, conservative congregations were banding together in what became known as the "Community of Concern," in order to combat what they saw as the erosion of traditional Christian doctrine. This group was particularly disturbed at the decision made by the General Council, the highest court of the

church, at its meeting in 1988, to admit practicing homosexuals to the ordained ministry. Some attribute the recent decline in church membership to this decision.[2]

However, because the United Church views itself as a community in which geographical, social, and theological diversity is celebrated, its members were anxious to resist the fragmentation resulting from these trends. They sought ways to promote unity, and publishing a new music resource would encourage a common musical identity, even when they disagreed on non-musical issues. A movement grew through the mid- to late-1980's, to request that the national church develop a new hymn book as soon as possible.

General Council responded at its meeting in London, Ontario in 1990, initiating the process of putting together a new hymnal. This took place at a low point in the life of the national church—it was still reeling from the 1988 decision—and there was considerable political tension. Many felt the church was too theologically permissive, and too focused on minority social issues. Some congregations broke away from the denomination altogether, and its leaders worried that the church would not survive intact into the twenty-first century. Hymn and Worship Resource Committee member Susan Marrier recalled her worry that "...the church was in danger of falling apart. [I felt that] a new hymn book could help to bring it back together" (Marrier interview 1998). Meg Grieve, the former United Church staff person for the Leadership Development Committee, Division of Mission in Canada, discussed the political climate of this time: "There was a deep anxiety about people. I think the United Church got really clenched about everything" (Grieve interview, 1998). A note from the HWRC minutes will illustrate her point. In discussing the results of a church-wide survey on music conducted by a church task force in 1990, HWRC members commented upon "...initially angry

responses in the wake of [the 1988 General Council meeting in] Victoria...desire of folks to be heard...expression of 'we want to tell you but can we trust that you will listen?'" (HWRC Minutes, 11-13 April 1991, p.3).

Meg Grieve was active in selecting the members of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee. She worked with recommendations from personnel committees within each region of the church. They sought "...people who were musically literate, people who had facility with language, people who loved the church." In addition they had to have "...a willingness to be sensitive to issues within the church....If this book was a good hymn book it would be an important healing thing for the church to do." (Grieve interview, 1998). Hence the mandate of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee was clear from the beginning: develop a common musical resource, to bring unity to a fragmented church. It was also clear that in order to do this, all the members were required to adopt "sensitivity" to opposing groups within the church.

Activities of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee

The twenty-four-member Hymn and Worship Resource Committee met fourteen times between April 1991 and June 1995. The committee members also met in smaller groups at other times, to make recommendations for the content of specific sections of the book. Seven subcommittees were assigned to specific aspects of the resource: Texts, Tunes, Psalter, Liturgy, Service Music, Children and Youth, and Language and Theology. Later in the process, an Implementation subcommittee was set up to coordinate the introduction of the new book to the church.

Questionnaire

Keeping in mind the imperative to be sensitive to the wishes of the people, one of the first things the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee undertook at its inaugural meeting in April of 1991, was to examine the responses to a 1990 questionnaire circulated to churches across the country by an earlier committee, the Hymn-worship Task Group. The response to this questionnaire is described in the HWRC minutes as "overwhelming. 2800 responses are in a computer bank[3]... Respondents were individuals, as well as congregational groups, clergy and many lay persons. Second questionnaires were sent to 600 congregations, and 250 were returned. The principal question focussed on the number of times a hymn was used, and the tune usually used." In an informal summary of the results, the HWRC concluded that the people were "...asking for re-instatement of heritage, asking for new language and imagery," and asking for "editing to be theologically, poetically responsible" (HWRC Minutes, 11-13 April 1991, p.3). The committee used the tabulated results of the questionnaire later in the process, when making judgments about which hymns to retain from previous collections.

Principles

The committee then determined the principles under which it would operate. This was a task with which the HWRC was specifically charged by the General Council, in the mandate given in 1990 (HWRC Minutes, 11-13 April 1991, p.4), and it required a great deal of effort to come to an agreement. It was not until the third meeting of the committee in November of 1991, that the "Principles of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee" were established (Appendix C). But the effort proved worthwhile, according to HWRC member Jeeva Sam:

> It took us quite a while to thrash out the original principles. So when we were brought back to them, they did stick. [The leaders would intervene to bring us back on track. Committee co-chairs] Nancy [Hardy] and Len [Lythgoe] would say, "Oh no, that contravenes the criteria we set. [Do you really want to go back and reconsider this issue?]" (Sam interview, 1998)

The Principles were laid out under four headings: An introduction explained the mandate of the committee; "Theological Objectives" laid out the ways in which the music resource was to enhance the worshipper's relationship to God; "Criteria for Selection" brought forward the need for sensitivity to differences among worshippers; and "Scope" defined the things a hymn-book must do: enrich the church's worship, honour the scriptures and the Christian Year, proclaim Christ's call to discipleship, include Canadian images and Canadian works, world music, and music of the United Church heritage.

Discussions leading up to the establishment of these Principles would certainly have encompassed the major question I began with, namely: "What music is worthy of inclusion in our service of worship?" For the United Church, at this time in its history, the document, "Principles of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee" articulates the answer.

As members of the committee struggled with the wording of the Principles, they were able to articulate some of the concerns of the church at large. The minutes record a sense that, in making working principles,

> ...we are issuing a statement to the church about what a new book will be like; ...we are not just setting forth our principles. We want to be careful of messages to the church which might not be helpful in gathering the church's interest in and support of the project....This should be a book in which everyone should find something that is nurturing, and can 'own'. The principles should help to give both the committee and the church a clear sense of where we are going. What we say to the church about our work must be in plain, accessible language. If we stumble here, people will prejudge the book (HWRC Minutes, 27-29 September 1991, p.5).

Language guidelines

Like editorial committees for the recent United States hymn books mentioned earlier, the committee spent a great deal of time articulating its position on language issues. It would not go as far in updating hymns and rendering them inclusive as the United Church of Christ Committee. For example, in The United Church of Christ publication, *The New Century Hymnal* (1995) the standard text:

> Come thou long Expected Jesus,
> born to set thy people free;
> from our fears and sins release us;
> let us find our rest in thee.

was changed to:

> Come, O long-expected Jesus,
> born to set all people free;
> from our fears and sins release us
> grant us your true liberty
> (cited in Young 1997, p.33).

which leads to an inappropriate emphasis on the final syllable of "liberty".

In *Voices United* the traditional text is retained intact (*Voices United* 2). However, the *Voices United* committee changed the traditional text,

> The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended;
> the darkness falls at thy behest;
> to thee our morning hymns ascended,
> thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

to:

> The day you gave us, God, is ended,
> the sun is sinking in the west;
> to you our morning hymns ascended,
> your praise shall sanctify our rest.
> (*Voices United* 437)

In this, as in several other cases where language was updated in *Voices United*, the traditional text is included with the new version, on the opposite page.

The committee struggled to maintain a tension between the desire to honour the memory of beloved old hymns, and the desire to be sensitive to current social realities. After much discussion and many revisions, a final version of the "Guidelines for Language in the New Hymn and Worship Resource" was agreed-upon on November 15th, 1993 (Appendix D).

Decision-making Process

Another important discussion in the earliest meetings was about how to make decisions. As the group thought about working together on this project, they discovered that hundreds of decisions would have to be made about the inclusion or exclusion of hundreds of hymns. At their second meeting, they established "that the HWRC would normally follow parliamentary procedure, with certain decisions requiring a two-thirds majority" (HWRC minutes, 27-29 September 1991, p.12). But as they worked, they felt a need for consensus, in order to maintain the unity of the group. At the next meeting, they found it necessary to revise their decision-making process, agreeing

> ...that on matters of policy, the committee will seek to proceed on the basis of general consensus. Where, however, it has become apparent that the committee has not been able to find consensus within the time available, and where in the judgement of the steering committee an immediate decision has become imperative, the Chair may call for a motion introduced under parliamentary procedure, with approval of the motion requiring two-thirds of those voting (HWRC minutes 8-10 November 1991, pp.13-14).

Clearly the priority for this group was to be unified amongst themselves, in order that the hymn resource might become a source of unity for the wider church. However, there was some dissension even over this resolution. Committee member Susan Marrier was quick to see the major weakness in a committee that worked by consensus. She

stated it frankly: "I had a lot of trouble with it in the first few meetings. We had people with different personalities. The ones who wanted consensus the most were the ones who wanted to push their own views" (Marrier interview 1998). However, her colleague Allan McIntosh felt that the more vocal people eventually became sensitive to the opinions of others: "It almost became predictable. You almost knew who was going to say what about which hymn. You'd be almost disappointed if they didn't make the predictable response. And that made things faster. At first we would have to go around the room and get 24 opinions, but as you go along you don't have to do that every time" (McIntosh interview 1998). This collegial model worked well throughout most of the life of the committee, in both large group and small group settings. As stated in the *Voices United* introductory booklet, "consensus...ensured that most material has been included or excluded from the new book only after the widest discussion within the Committee. The approach...also ensured a remarkable degree of harmony and fellowship among Committee members through four years of demanding work" (Lukey et al, 1996a).

However, the process of consensus took extra time, and the system broke down at the very end, when production deadlines loomed and money for committee meetings ran short. In a face-to-face interview, HWRC member Joan McMurtry said she was disappointed in the way the final editing process was handled. Ostensibly because of finances, only a small working group was able to meet after the meeting of 23-25 June 1995, allowing some hymns into the book with which she did not agree. Verses which had been accepted earlier were left out of some hymns, presumably by editor John Ambrose. This bothered her a great deal. She was dedicated to the participatory and collegial process which had been established. There was a "grass-rootedness" about it which was

essential. Losing her ability to contribute at the end made her feel that there were issues of power and control at work for those still involved, about which she still has some resentment. "When you have spent time on a project and you're no longer part of that process, it's not comfortable" (McMurtry interview, 1998). To others, the last-minute decision-making by the editor was necessary for purely practical reasons. Committee member Susan Lukey gave an example of the kind of decisions that had to be made just prior to publication:

> We wanted "Morning Glory, Starlit Sky". We wanted it with the word changes that had been made for *Songs For A Gospel People*. John went to [the author, W.H. Vanstone] and asked for it, and he said "I want it the way I wrote it or don't print it at all." This was only a few weeks before press. At that point John needed a hymn for the holy week section, to fill three-quarters of a page. That's how "There is a Green Hill far Away" got in (Lukey interview 1998).

It may be that the editor was experiencing a certain amount of fatigue with the time-consuming collaborative process. And if so, this is evidence of a breakdown of the unifying function of the hymn resource. If the committee itself felt alienated from editorial decisions, how could the church become unified through the resulting publication? On the other hand, it may be that because of production deadlines, executive decisions had to be made in the absence of the committee. Whether there were issues of power and control in operation here, or whether it was a simple case of unfortunate but necessary decisions being made by the editor, it is clear that up until the end at least, a great deal of effort was made to include the entire committee in repertoire decisions.

Repertoire decisions

In the beginning the HWRC went through *The Hymn Book* (1971), evaluating each hymn's text and tune, according to a four point grading system, marking it "Keep as is," "Keep with changes," "Maybe keep, with or without changes," or "Do not keep."

By the fourth meeting (28 February -1 March 1992) the committee had, in the words of John Ambrose "...begun to see the magnitude of the task" (HWRC minutes, 28 February -1 March 1992). Prior to this time, gradings appear in the minutes, but later gradings were done by sub-committees and distributed to all committee members by the project office, so that questions or comments could be raised at the following meeting of the whole committee. This allowed the committee to shorten the time spent evaluating hymns in plenary sessions. Once *The Hymn Book* had been graded, committee members went on to evaluate hymns from *The Hymnary*, *Songs for a Gospel People*, *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, *The United Methodist Hymnal* and the *Psalter Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church*. Several other resources were examined on an informal basis.

In addition to the examination of existing resources, the committee solicited new materials from the public, and, according to editor John Ambrose, "...some came in. I think about 70 items [were] included" as a result of requests for new material. (Ambrose interview 1998).

By August, 1994 there were "...some 2000 items....considered worthy of inclusion," according to a message to General Council from Co-chairs Len Lythgoe and Nancy Hardy (Hardy and Lythgoe, 1994). The task at hand, then, was to "drain the pool" in the words of Nancy Hardy: to reduce that number to the 600 that were to be included in the book (HWRC minutes, 10-13 February 1994, p.6). For ease of travel, the

committee was divided up into regional groups, which would each be responsible for selecting a given number hymns for a certain topical category. Allan McIntosh put it this way: "We were told to get them down to a certain number. We had to think of things such as balance, in terms of musical styles, theological emphases. What are the Sundays in Lent about, what are the themes? [Much of the activity was in] sifting through and trying to come to that minimum number" (McIntosh interview 1998).

A great deal of emphasis was placed on the actual current usage of hymns from *The Hymn Book* (1971) and other resources, as measured in the 1990 questionnaire to congregations. As Len Lythgoe stated, "A lot of the material is there because it had to be" (Lythgoe interview 1998b). This reflects the deep sense of responsibility he felt to the explicit preferences of the church.

Jeeva Sam articulated the importance of "heritage hymns" in the committee's deliberations: "There are times when we looked at a hymn from *The Hymnary*, [in the light of the criteria, and worked with it.] And those were still included. In that case, the need to be included because it was loved by the church precluded the need for [the criteria to be met]" (Sam interview 1998).

The questionnaire was also important to the contentious discussion of "Onward Christian Soldiers". A list was published in early 1995, of hymns to be included in the new resource, and this familiar hymn was not on it. There was an angry response, in letters and phone calls to the project office, and as a result, the committee reconsidered "Onward, Christian Soldiers" at it's meeting in June, 1995, entertaining the possibility of reinstating it. But the HWRC did not bend to the pressure to bring the hymn back into the collection. Committee members were able to appeal to the questionnaire, where, according to John

Murphy, it "...was nowhere on anybody's list. People interpreted this as losing out on military imagery, but because it was low down on everybody's list, [it wasn't difficult to eliminate it]" (Murphy interview1998).

It is true that this hymn was not in common usage, as measured in the 1990 questionnaire. But the questionnaire did not account for the popularity of the hymn, or the reaction the committee would encounter by excluding it. It was popular because of the powerful memories associated with it in the lives of those who reacted to its exclusion, and not because they had been singing it recently. In any case, the committee stuck to their decision, upholding the language guidelines, which stated that "Militaristic and triumphalist[4] language when referring to the church is to be avoided." (Appendix D, item 7.)

Samplers

As part of the process of developing a sense of ownership of the new hymn resource on the part of the church, the Committee consulted formally with congregations and individual churchgoers by the means of samplers: two for congregations and one for General Council. The first congregational publication was the Test Packet, a loose-leaf binder sent to one hundred congregations in the fall of 1992. It contained pre-screened selections on themes of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, and the congregations were asked to report on how the selections were received. The usefulness of these reports to the committee is clear in the minutes (HWRC minutes, 17-20 June 1993, p.4). The second was a more widely distributed paperback book, containing forty-seven hymns covering a broader selection of themes. Titled *Voices United: A Sampler for Congregations*, a copy was distributed to each congregation in May of 1993. It was also used by regional groups

at conference meetings. Comments and recommendations were invited in a response form which accompanied the book, and at least 560 of these were compiled into a report by project staff for the meeting of 10-13 February 1994. It is clear from the minutes that this form of consultation with the congregations was extremely important to the committee's work (HWRC minutes, 10-13 February 1994, pp.2, 11). Not only did it provide much needed information about the reception of the material, but it was also good public relations. John Ambrose said of the 1993 *Sampler*, "We needed to keep saying to the church, that this work is underway. [It was] a consciousness raising thing" (Ambrose interview 1998).

The sampler prepared for the national General Council meeting in Fergus, Ontario in August of 1994 served both these functions, but was also used to inform the church leadership of the progress of the committee.

In addition to the formal sampler publications, committee members took it upon themselves to test materials in their home congregations. Allan McIntosh sensed a feeling of satisfaction among his people as a result: "We were one of the testing congregations, and there was a great deal of pride when [*Voices United*] came out, with people saying 'We made that book'" (McIntosh interview 1998).

Implementation

From the beginning, it was clear to committee members that they would need to develop a careful plan for implementation of the resource. An Implementation subcommittee was struck in February 1993, and strategies for the introduction of the new resource were discussed at virtually all the following meetings of the HWRC. In the spring of 1996, when the final version of the hymn book was published and available to

congregations, HWRC members pitched in to introduce it to groups in every conference of the United Church. Subcommittee members recruited Implementation Teams in every region of Canada, supplying them with materials for worship services and festivals in celebration of *Voices United*. Articles discussing the work of the HWRC were published in *The United Church Observer*, which is distributed to every household of the national church. The overall effect was to thoroughly prepare the church for *Voices United*. It was this effort to carefully guide the introduction of the resource that ensured its immediate welcome. *Voices United* indeed became the unifying symbol the church so desperately needed.

In a letter to Implementation Teams, Susan Lukey described her experience at the end of one of the hymn festivals she had led: "The glow came when Rev. Bob Mutlow thanked me... He held up a copy of *Voices United* and said, 'The blue *Hymnary* was the beloved book of the United Church. The red *Hymn Book* never quite made it. But as I sing out of this book, I have a feeling in my heart that this too will be a beloved book of the United Church.' May it be so!" (Lukey 1996).

The committee members I spoke to certainly felt that the book had been received very well. And this is borne out by its publishing success. As of April 1998, more than 280,000 copies had been sold (Graham interview 1998). Lydia Pedersen said, "It was a pastoral book, and it exceeded expectations" (Pedersen interview 1998). According to Nancy Hardy, "It is phenomenally successful. People love it. They actually use words like that" (Hardy interview 1998). John Ambrose said proudly, "It is the people's book" (Ambrose interview 1998).

Major issues

In individual interviews I conducted with ten members of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee, several identifiable themes emerged. These help to clarify which issues committee members felt were important to this process.

Comparison between The Hymn Book *(1971) and* Voices United

Many of the HWRC interviewees commented upon the difference in the compilation process used for *Voices United* and for *The Hymn Book*. Generally, the approach of the 1971 committee was considered to be elitist and condescending. *Voices United* managing editor John Ambrose put it this way: "[If you look at the 1971 Joint Committee, it] represents musical and clerical heavyweights. The dynamics of deferment get into this very heavily. They had some real battles; we didn't have any. We had an enormous spirit of cooperation. Opinions would run strongly [in 1971]" (Ambrose interview 1998).

Len Lythgoe put it bluntly: "The mission of the 1971 book was to elevate the tastes of the congregations....None of the [HWRC] was of the opinion that we should be elevating the tastes of anyone" (Lythgoe interview 1998a).

According to John Murphy, "The degree of consultation was very different. There was a lot less common work [in the 1971 process], and a great deal done by a few" (Murphy interview 1998). Lydia Pedersen felt that "[*The Hymn Book*] was imposed on people. They said here you are, this is good for you. This committee consulted constantly, and that's [what made it unique and valuable]" (Pedersen interview 1998).

In fact, the 1971 committee did consult the people by means of a questionnaire, but just once and only once, when determining the inclusion of hymns from the "gospel call" tradition. In the words of Stanley Osborne, Secretary of the Joint Committee,

> Hymns of the gospel call received special treatment. The Committee recognized such hymns were as unpopular in some areas as they were popular in other areas. It was decided to test the mind of the church. A questionnaire was mailed to a representative selection of churches across Canada. The replies indicated a preference for only 21 out of a total of 117. The Committee accepted 20 of the 21 (Osborne 1976, p.xi.).

Perhaps the committee was encountering the fondness of the United Church congregations in Newfoundland for the gospel hymns of *Songs of the Gospel* (1948). It could not ignore the strength of this tradition. Nor could it ignore the desires of youth within the church:

> Young people especially wish to sing hymns cast in the style of the twentieth century. Despite the difficulties involved, the church must be hospitable to all creative energies if it is to live as Christ's body in these times, and seek to adapt contemporary modes of poetic and musical expression for use in public worship (Preface to *The Hymn Book* 1971).

The Joint Committee responsible for *The Hymn Book* did make an effort to respond to the needs of youth. But *Voices United* editor John Ambrose felt that "[s]ome of the more folk/pop style stuff [which was included] was often [a] bad choice. There was a mentality operating that doesn't realize how condescending it's being" (Ambrose interview 1998).

In Osborne's *If Such Holy Song*, a companion volume to *The Hymn Book*, we see evidence of the kind of condescension of which Ambrose spoke. In it Osborne made clear just what he meant by the "difficulties involved" in introducing "contemporary modes" into a hymn book: In his view, the church, presumably as represented by the Joint Committee, "...recognizes that there are people who have not grown up culturally, who

still clamour for light music that is devoid of art. Consequently, organists are being called upon to play cheap music now and then." Thus the committee was obliged to accommodate the tastes of these people, by "...seeking to relate to the younger element in the church" (Osborne 1976, p.531).

Twenty years later, this approach seems elitist. The differing attitudes between the committees could be seen as a reflection of the changes in the culture of the Canadian church over time. Where in the past it would suffice to rely upon the judgments of a select group of leaders in choosing a hymn collection, it now requires a large-scale process of consultation.

Consultation

One of the most prominent values of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee was that of consultation. As the committee Co-Chairs stated in the Preface to *Voices United*, "From the beginning of our deliberations, we lived with the challenge of meeting all needs of our diverse and inclusive church. We decided that *Voices United* was to be a 'people's book,' and to that end, engaged in a process of wide consultation within the church, producing two samplers of material under consideration" (Hardy and Lythgoe 1996, p. viii-ix). If *Voices United* was to become the "beloved book of the United Church" described by Bob Mutlow in his speech to the hymn festival, it both would have to be, and to be *seen* to be, the result of a collaborative process involving the people of the church.

This was clear to the committee from the beginning, when drafting the wording of the Principles of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee (Appendix C). The phrase "...in consultation with the people of the United Church..." appears prominently in the

first sentence of the Introduction, and the word "consultation" appears twice more in the space of five short paragraphs. So this was the guiding rule governing all the others—the only way that the new resource could bring a measure of healing to the divided church. As Jeeva Sam said, "People in the church were consulted and involved in the process, right from the 'get go'" (Sam interview, 1998).

The committee also went beyond its own membership to discuss its work with members of the Presbyterian, Anglican and Catholic hymn book committees, and the committee that produced *The Hymn Book* (1971). It also consulted experts in the areas of hymn language, theology and international music resources.

Other repertoires

Apart from the formal consultation which took place in the form of samplers and questionnaires, committee members researched specific areas of repertoire in order to make sure they were represented sufficiently and appropriately. In each case, committee members brought in people with unique knowledge of the repertoire to participate.

Children and Youth

Susan Lukey was involved in researching music for children and young people, and led a subcommittee which consulted groups of children and youth. There was some concern that there was no youth representative on the HWRC. According to Rev. Lukey, "[t]he youngest committee member was in his late twenties. The reality was that the nominating committee did approach someone in their late teens-early twenties, but the person turned the opportunity down because he/she did not know what the next 5 years would hold. The length of commitment to the project was a deterrent to this age group" (Lukey 1998). Accordingly, the Children and Youth subcommittee spent a great deal of

time consulting with groups of young people, and then "spent hours going through the lists and suggestions" (Lukey 1998).

The HWRC deliberately did not set aside a section of the new book dedicated to children's hymns. Instead they "worked at providing at least one child/youth selection in each section of the book....[W]e wanted to make the statement that children and youth are an integral part of the worship life of the congregation, not a separate part that we acknowledge just in the children's time" (Lukey 1998).

Non-English language groups within the United Church

John Ambrose worked with United Church groups of Koreans, Japanese and French-Canadians, and there are original language representations of repertoire from each of these groups. There was no expectation that English speaking congregations would take up these songs, but as Ambrose said, "It was a gesture towards the inclusion of these people in the church. [The] purpose [of including these hymns] was to help English speaking congregations get a sense of the language" (Ambrose interview 1998).

This was more than just a signal to English speakers of the existence of other language groups in the church. The groups themselves would then feel ownership of the resource. As Susan Marrier said, "Because the ...book was so diverse, anybody who can, can thumb through the book and get a picture of the church. [Many groups can call the book their own] even if they don't use all the material" (Marrier interview 1998).

Global resources

One subcommittee researched music of other parts of the world for inclusion in *Voices United*. As stated in the notes accompanying the 1993 *Sampler for Congregations*, "International and ecumenical gatherings have opened the doors of many

churches to new hymns, rhythms, styles and ways of expressing the faith." These trends were apparent in *Songs for a Gospel People* (1987), and they are also seen in *Voices United* as the result of efforts by various individuals, notably the Co-chair, Leonard Lythgoe, who said he was anxious to "expand the parameters of church music to [embrace] world music." (Lythgoe interview 1998a). Countries represented in *Voices United* include South Africa, El Salvador, India, Korea, and Japan, among others.

Women's Repertoire

A group led by Joan McMurtry researched "feminist emancipatory hymns" and proposed ways in which these could be intentionally included in *Voices United* (HWRC minutes, 17-19 June 1994, p. 9). Examples of this type of hymn in the final book could include "Mother and God" (by Miriam Therese Winter, 1987) or "Long before the Night" (by Carolyn McDade, 1988), both of which use feminine images for God. These could be closely identified with a women's movement within the United church. According to McMurtry, "The experience of women's gatherings were what got those hymns into the book" (McMurtry interview 1998).

In addition to these subcommittees, there was a repertoire group led by Gerald Hobbs, which examined "heritage" hymns, hymns which were deemed to have historical importance to the church (HWRC minutes, 12-14 June 1992).

Each of the groups consulted were made to feel that their concerns had been heard. The committee had come to them with requests for material, and in each case, the result was that some of the material was included.

Emotion

The role of the emotions in this process is of course difficult to measure, but the emotional response to music is what enables people to feel that they have come together in singing, no matter what their social or theological differences. The comments of committee members show that many of them acknowledge emotional response to be a factor under consideration when deciding on repertoire:

Susan Lukey said, "Our bodies react emotionally to hymns. Different things move different people. Some of the things that the more classically [trained people would be moved by, would not be things that would move me, and vice versa]" (Lukey interview 1998).

John Ambrose: "I have never been touched by texts and tunes the way I have been through this process....I have to begin with the text, but then it's the music that really makes it happen. If I look at something like the Jaroslav Vajda Christmas text, "Before the Marvel of the Night" [in *Voices United*] it's very moving. But then I hear it set to the tune by Carl Schalk, and it is something else again. Music gives flight to a rich text." (Ambrose interview 1998).

Culture and education

If, as Susan Lukey says, different people have different emotional responses to hymns, their responses are conditioned by many factors. One of the factors identified by some committee members was geographical location. The distinction was made on the basis of the geographical and social context from which committee-members came, whether it was the east coast, the west coast, the prairies, Québec or Ontario, and whether it was an urban or rural setting.

According to John Ambrose, who lives in Ontario, "The west would be a bit more liberal or even Unitarian, than the east. There was a general feeling of experimentation in the west" (Ambrose interview 1998). Jeeva Sam, from Regina, Saskatchewan, put it this way: "People from the Maritimes were always pressing for more traditional hymns, because that's the reality in a place like Newfoundland" (Sam interview 1998).

Lydia Pedersen, organist at Royal York Roads United Church in Toronto, had this to say about the urban-rural split: "Large city churches have far more experience, in music and text. People in the smaller centres don't have the education. We are looking for more interesting things. Smaller places are more interested in platitudes and clichés" (Pedersen interview 1998).

Lydia Pedersen's opinions touch upon cultural differences which are not necessarily associated with where people live, but rather with classical-music education. Although most committee members had some musical background, there were a few who were not classically trained, or who came from congregations where most members had no classical background. Joan McMurtry of Vancouver was seen by many as an advocate of progressive feminist views on the committee, but as a person without formal music training, she found herself making musical alliances with committee members whose views on feminism were quite different: "I wanted to include music that touched the heart more. And that often included music with a gospel-southern gospel feel. So I found myself making strange alliances..." (McMurtry interview 1998).

Styles

In this case, style was the unifying factor, between McMurtry and her more theologically conservative colleagues. One of the questions I asked each interviewee was:

There are a number of different musical styles represented throughout the contemporary church in the English-speaking world. One might speak of "folk-style hymns", "worship/praise songs", "contemporary hymns", "Contemporary Christian rock", "world music", or "gospel music". Name any that I have left out. In your opinion, are any or all of these represented in Voices United*? If not, why not? Should they have been included?*

One interviewee mentioned that I had left out "heritage hymns" from my question, as a style of music in the contemporary church. But most felt they had included all these styles, with the exception of "Contemporary Christian Rock." Granted, "Contemporary Christian Rock" or "Contemporary Christian" is better known as a format for radio programming than a style of music used in hymnals. In including it, I was naming a style not often associated with the United Church, but rather with more theologically conservative evangelical churches in North America.

Nancy Hardy had this to say in response: "Contemporary Christian Rock was not there [in *Voices United*]. There was not a conscious attempt to leave it out. A lot of it tends to be triumphalist, and was not acceptable... Hymn books may be irrelevant to the segment that wants the church to be using rock bands, overheads and that kind of thing exclusively" (Hardy interview, 1998).

According to Susan Marrier, "Most of us on the committee didn't feel a need to include [Contemporary Christian Music]... We were interested in importing some new things [styles] to the United Church, but the CCM stuff was not one of them" (Marrier interview 1998).

Although she acknowledged that "Worship/Praise Songs", which are also associated with evangelicalism, exist in this book, Susan Lukey stated that the committee was "cautious" about them. "That was a statement about being United Church and not one of the more fundamentalist traditions." So, in order to "be United Church", it was important for these committee members not to identify with strongly evangelical Contemporary Christian Rock music.

I followed up by asking her: *But how then can you use the older evangelical hymns, like "Blessed Assurance"?* She replied: ""Blessed Assurance" has been a part of our history. It's one thing to use something like that. It's another thing to include new things with that old theology." In other words, if the hymn was considered to be important to the collective memory of the church, texts which would otherwise be unacceptable could be included. What was essential was that the committee be able to know what styles formed a part of United Church history, and that the committee not perpetuate styles which they now found exclusive.

Theology

Although the above comment by Susan Lukey would appear to indicate an ambiguous approach to theology in this hymnbook, committee members did take theological issues seriously. Lydia Pedersen remembers "...many a theological discussion" at committee meetings. "When our children are singing hymns, what will they be singing?" (Pedersen interview 1998). In other words, will they have the same values as we have?

In the Introduction to *Voices United,* managing editor John Ambrose maintains that the hymns of the church must "...be grounded in the central tenets of Christian belief,

and point to the living out of those beliefs" (page x). My question to the interviewees was: *How were these intentions carried out? Have you succeeded in making the 'central tenets of Christian belief' the primary focus of this book?*

Allan McIntosh had this response: "I'm not sure that United Church members could agree on what the central tenets are....Looking at the table of contents, what we were doing was creating a theological framework. There are certainly hymns in the book that push the borders of Christian belief, and some that some might label heretical, [but] most would fit the theological framework of the creeds, or whatever" (McIntosh interview 1998).

This is hardly a ringing endorsement of Ambrose's solidly doctrinal stand. There were some who held a more liberal view than McIntosh, and some who were more theologically conservative. However, each of the committee members I interviewed placed a high value upon the message conveyed by the hymns in *Voices United*. Joan McMurtry said "...this resource will shape the ethos and the theology of the church for years to come. I think the hymns for many of us are as powerful as scripture. It shapes us" (McMurtry interview 1998). As Jeeva Sam said, "We sing our faith. We sing it more than we articulate it in a sense" (Sam interview 1998).

Conclusion

The work of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee has done much to shape the ethos and theology of the church, by bringing together the diverse range of musical styles and theological viewpoints that make up the culture of the United Church of Canada. In doing so, the committee has established a standard repertoire for the church

for the next twenty years in the form of *Voices United*, now a beloved book and a powerful symbol of unity within a church that values unity very highly.

Like Joan McMurtry, Jeeva Sam and the other members of the committee, I, through this study, have been confirmed in my estimation of the power of music in the religious lives of people. Thus, as a practising church musician, I must acknowledge my own power to guide the worship experience of the congregation, and wield it carefully. As a result of my conversations with committee-members and my study of the minutes of the HWRC, I can begin to answer some of the "broader questions" I raised in my introduction:

What music is worthy of inclusion in our service of worship? This can only be answered through discussion, with reference to a clear statement of principles, established by the clergy, music leaders and people of the church, with the theology, tradition and values of the church in mind.

What should our position be, regarding the language of worship? A policy must be formulated, articulating the church's approach to archaic, militaristic, sexist or discriminatory language.

How will we retain a connection with our musical heritage? By including hymns which evoke an emotional resonance with the past, but which are in keeping with the established principles and language policies.

What repertoires from other churches and cultures should be included in our worship? How do we involve children and youth in the music of worship? And who has the right to decide the answers to these questions? The HWRC process puts one value above all others, that of consultation. The answers to these three final questions are not

the same for every church, but approaches to them should include wide consultation within the church, and outside of it.

As church musicians and church leaders seek to understand the culture of their congregations, the people will feel that they are identified by the music they sing, that they are, in the words of Jeeva Sam, "singing their faith."

Endnotes

[1] Dr. Osborne was acknowledged in the preface to *The Hymn Book*: "Without his extensive knowledge of hymnology, his skill as a musician, and his indefatigable labours, this book would not have been produced."

[2] Lauri Friesen of Alberta Report says that church membership has declined "...especially since the acceptance of homosexual ordination in 1988." Like other mainline denominations in Canada, the United Church saw its membership decline from 849,400 in 1988 to 701,968 in 1997, according to church records (Desousa 1998).

[3] Susan Lukey put this figure at 2,000 (Lukey interview 1998).

[4] "Triumphalist" was a word used in the Language Guidelines, and by several committee members. I understand it to describe music which celebrates the victory of God over the powers of evil, emphasizing the Christian's participation in that victory, but which also excludes non-Christian points of view.

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Graham, Fred. 1998. Worship officer, Division of Mission in Canada, The United Church of Canada. Telephone interview, 23 April.

Hardy, Nancy. 1998. Co-chair of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee, The United Church of Canada. Telephone interview, 20 March.

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Murphy, John. 1998. Member of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee, The United Church of Canada. Telephone interview, 27 March.

Pederson, Lydia. 1998. Member of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee, The United Church of Canada. Telephone interview, 20 March.

Sam, Jeeva. 1998. Member of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee, The United Church of Canada. Telephone interview, 19 March.

Interviewees:

John E. Ambrose (b.1936): Managing Editor of the project, John is an ordained minister and musician, who has done post-graduate work in liturgical studies. He resides in Mississauga, Ontario.

Fred Graham (b.1946): Consultant for Congregational Worship at the national office. Fred served as Liturgical Consultant to the Committee. He did post-graduate studies in organ performance and liturgical theology, and currently works with United Church congregations on matters of worship.

Nancy E. Hardy (b.1938): an ordained minister and musician, she served as Co-Chair of the Committee along with Len Lythgoe. Nancy lives in London, Ontario.

Susan Lukey (b.1959): an ordained minister, educator and musician, she chaired both the Children-Youth Music sub-committee and the Implementation sub-committee. A native Albertan, she resides in High River, Alberta.

Leonard Lythgoe (b.1932): a musician and educator, he served as Co-Chair of the Committee along with Nancy Hardy. He also worked on the Text sub-committee and the Implementation sub-committee. Len was editor of the Music Leader's edition of *Voices United* and now resides in Richmond, B.C.

Susan Marrier (b.1941): a church musician with theological background, she served on the Psalter sub-committee and on the Text sub-committee. She lives in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

J. Allan McIntosh (b.1940): an ordained minister and musician, he worked with the Text sub-committee and the Liturgical sub-committee. He resides in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Joan K. McMurtry (b.1951): an ordained minister and educator, she was a member of the Text sub-committee, the Liturgical sub-committee and the language and theology task groups. She resides in Vancouver, B.C.

John Murphy (b.1955): an ordained minister and musician, became the representative of Newfoundland-Labrador conference when Todd McDonald moved to Ontario. John has been a member of the Psalter sub-committee and resides in Musgravetown, Newfoundland.

Lydia Pedersen (b.1947): a church musician and educator, she was Chair of the Tunes sub-committee and served on the Editorial Committee. She is a resident of Toronto, Ontario.

Jeeva R.Edward Sam (b.1957): an ordained minister and musician, Jeeva served as a member of the Tunes sub-committee and the Global Resources sub-committee. He resides in Regina, Saskatchewan.

(Biographies excerpted from "The People Behind the Resource: An Introduction" in Lukey et al, 1996b).

Members of the Hymn and Worship Resources Committee:

Seiichi Ariga*
Mary Beth Nicks Barbour
Catherine J. Crooks*
Nancy E. Hardy
R. Gerald Hobbs
David Kai
Susan Lukey
Leonard Lythgoe
Susan Marrier
Todd L. McDonald
J. Allan McIntosh
David J.A. McKane
Diana McLeod
Joan K. McMurtry
Pierann E. Moon
John Murphy
Willis Noble
Don Parsons
Lydia Pedersen
Lillian Perigoe
William A. Richards
V. Martyn Sadler
Jeeva R. Edward Sam
Betty Sangster
Stuart Semple
Louise Skibsted
Joanne b. Sorrill*
Ruth Wiwchar

*These individuals resigned their membership during the tenure of the committee.

Coordinator of Liturgical Resources: Fred Graham
Managing Editor: John E. Ambrose

Questions asked of interviewees:

1. *Why did you want to get involved in the creation of a new worship resource? What unique perspectives did you bring to the process?*

2. *Looking at the criteria for selection of hymns for inclusion in Voices United, are there any criteria which are more important than the others, from your point of view?*

3. *Once the established criteria had been satisfied, there would still be a large number of hymns from which to choose. How did you decide which items had value?*

4. *Were there differences in theology, language and tradition between various regions of the country? If so, how did these manifest themselves in your committee deliberations?*

5. *Your committee co-chairs have stated in the preface to* Voices United *that this was to be a "people's book" (p. viii). In your opinion, were you successful in reaching this stated goal?*

6. *What were the major issues that the committee had to face and resolve?*

7. *There are a number of different musical styles represented throughout the contemporary church in the English-speaking world. One might speak of "folk-style hymns", "worship/praise songs", "contemporary hymns", "Contemporary Christian rock", "world music", or "gospel music". Name any that I have left out. In your opinion, are any or all of these represented in _Voices United_? If not, why not? Should they have been included?*

8. *In the Introduction to _Voices United_, Managing Editor John Ambrose maintains that the hymns of the church must "...be grounded in the central tenets of Christian belief, and point to the living out of those beliefs." (page x) How were these intentions carried out? Have you succeeded in making the "central tenets of Christian belief" the primary focus of this book?*

9. *Do you feel that it is important to estimate and consider the emotional response of individual congregation members to a hymn, when considering it for inclusion?*

10. *To what extent did your own emotional response to a piece of music influence your vote to include it, or not include it, in the collection?*

Principles of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee

Introduction

The Hymn and Worship Resource Committee (HWRC), in consultation with the people of The United Church of Canada, will develop a collection of resources for use in worship throughout The United Church of Canada, as commissioned by the 33rd General Council (1990). This task was mandated by the 33rd General Council following a broad consultation with congregations across the church.

Such a collection will include hymns, songs, psalms, sung responses, services of worship, prayers, and other materials.

The new collection will be drawn from those now in use, including *The Hymnary* (1930), *Songs of the Gospel* (1948), *The Hymnal of the Evangelical United Brethren Church* (1957), *The Hymn book* (1971), *Songs For a Gospel People* (1987), *The book of Common Order* (1932), *Service Books* (1969), and *Services for Optional Use* (1984-1990), and from the wealth of other materials from our own church and around the world.

After wide consultation within the church, the Committee will present the completed collection to the General Council for approval.

The Committee will develop a plan for introducing the new collection.

Theological Objectives

This resource will:

A. Enable our worship of God, who is revealed in the Biblical story and uniquely in Jesus, the Word made flesh, and who, by the Spirit, is at work in the church and the world.
B. Celebrate God's presence among us and express our faith as a prophetic, pastoral, and evangelical church.
C. Nurture and sustain our relationship with God and one another, while challenging us in our Christian discipleship.
D. Unite us in worship and praise while acknowledging our diversity of gifts.

Criteria for Selection

With the following criteria in mind, the contents will:

A. Reflect our oneness in Christ and the variety of cultures and traditions within The United Church of Canada.
B. Embrace all God's people, with particular sensitivity to age, race, gender, and physical abilities, and reflect a wide range of images of God.
C. In its music be readily singable and playable in congregational and other settings.
D. Have textual, liturgical, and musical integrity.

Scope

The collection will:

A. Enrich all elements of the church's worship.
B. Enrich the celebration of the Christian Year and honour the scriptures through a variety of words, prayers and praise.
C. Proclaim Christ's call to faithful discipleship in terms of our society and our time.
D. Reflect Canadian images and concerns and draw on the work of Canadian composers and writers.
E. Bring into our life worship resources of other churches in Canada and around the world.
F. Draw on the best of our historic traditions and strengthen the singing and worship heritage of The United Church of Canada.

Approved by the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee November 10, 1991

Guidelines for Language in the New Hymn and Worship Resource

People Language

1. With reference to persons, language will be gender-inclusive, avoiding use of any expression that defines people in terms of one gender.
2. Language for people will show sensitivity to non-gender issues, where prejudices and patronizing or derogatory attitudes may be communicated, however unintentionally. Careful attention will be given to problems created by the evolution of language and shifts in the meaning of terms.

God Language

3. In God Language, we will seek both to employ non-gendered images in the naming of God, and to balance the use of male-gender images with female-gender images.
4. The use of gender-defined pronouns for God will be avoided. Exceptions would be considered in those instances where a metaphor or simile is being employed which would make the use of such gendered pronouns appropriate.
5. Language will be used to characterize God's relationship with us as other than coercive, oppressive, or demeaning of the dignity and worth of human beings and of creation.

Other

6. The use of gendered pronouns for inanimate objects, social collectivities like cities and nations, and institutions like the church will be avoided.
7. Militaristic and triumphalist language when referring to the church is to be avoided.
8. References to the people of Israel, whether in biblical times or modern times, will avoid any suggestion of God's rejection of Israel or Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus of Nazareth.
9. In telling the biblical story with names of Middle Eastern nations (Israel, Syria, Egypt and others), sensitivity to the inferences which might be construed in reference to the contemporary political realities will be exercised.
10. In editing, retention of literary, historical and theological integrity remains an important concern.

Archaisms—Archaic vocabulary items, pronouns, verb endings, and printing conventions will be updated:

(a) removed from materials written after 1900

(b) revised according to Guideline 10 for materials written before 1900, with consideration for historical, theological, and literary integrity.

(c) retain the style of *The Hymn Book*—for example: capitalize noun titles; do not capitalize adjectives and pronouns, except where adjectives are used as evocative.

Hallelujah or Alleluia—it was agreed that, all other things being equal, the choice would be *hallelujah.*

Lord—The word "Lord" as name and title has an historic and valued place in Christian worship. "The Lord" was the most common Hebrew naming of God; "Jesus is Lord" is a basic Christian confession.

For many, Lord is a term of intimacy and authority in naming both God and Jesus. For many, Lord is oppressive and hierarchical.

Mindful of these tensions, the HWRC will act as follows:

1. When naming or referring to God, we will reduce the use of "Lord."
2. When naming or referring to Jesus, we will use a range of names and images – for example, Lord, Friend, Companion, Liberator, Saviour, Lover.
3. When it is ambiguous whether Lord refers to the first or second person of the Trinity, we will assess each occurrence individually.

Summary

It is the commitment of the Hymn and Worship Resource Committee that the collection as a whole respect the preceding guidelines. On occasion, an exception for a particular text—for reasons of poetic integrity or widespread public attachment to an older form—may seem warranted. If so, the case for the inclusion of the unedited text will need to be made convincingly to the whole committee, which may grant such exceptions.

Revision of November 15, 1993